

Referring to the situation as it existed in the course of the year 1919, Colonel Etherton, who, as mentioned earlier, was then British Consul in Kashgar, wrote: "The Bolshevik Government in Tashkent was then in no position to assume hostilities against Bukhara, for they were confronted by the British in north-east Persia, and were meeting with strong opposition from insurgent bands in Semirechia and Ferghana, *with all of whom I was in touch.*"<sup>19</sup>

Among the elements disappointed with the Bolshevik policy were even a number of leaders of the Young Bukhara party, who after the conquest of the Khanate by the Tashkent Communists, preferred to escape to Afghanistan or to join the Basmachi than to be tools of the new masters of their country.

Thus the British, facing a turn of opinion in Central Asia in their favor, might have been in a position to prepare an ambitious scheme for the creation of some sort of Pan-Turanian state, which in alliance with Great Britain, would constitute an additional barrier protecting India. There are good reasons to think that, as usually in such cases, local British elements, well acquainted with the situation and aware of the potentialities, did cherish such ambitions. This attitude would have been only a normal outgrowth of the New Delhi school of political thought, which, to take an example from the Arabian Peninsula, dictated to the government of India an alliance with Ibn Saud in Nejd in preference to Sharif Husein of Mecca. Yet the statesmen in London were unwilling to go so far; they decided in September, 1919, to end intervention in Russia. An oversimplified interpretation of that decision identified both the Caucasus and Turkestan with Russia, despite the fact

that these regions were, in reality, merely a colonial extension of the Russian Empire, with occasional islands of Russian settlers. On such a premise, then, the British in 1919 shrank from sending reinforcements to Transcaspia and adopted the attitude of "wait and see." The British troops already on the spot remained, but without reinforcements they were inadequate to settle the Turkestan question. Their continued presence irked the Bolshevik authorities.

In August, 1919, the Malleson-Ashkhabad coalition suffered its first major defeat at the hands of the Bolsheviks, who had been able

is *Op. cit.*, p. 151. Italics mine.